

SOUNDING OUT THE WORD OF THE LORD

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything.”
1 Thessalonians 1:8.

PAUL went to Thessalonica from Philippi with a sore back but with a sound heart. He went resolved to spend and to be spent for his Lord in that city. On the first three Sabbaths he spoke to the Jews in the synagogue but he soon found that they were obstinately resolved to reject Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Therefore he directed his attention to the heathen of Thessalonica and among them he had wonderful success. Large numbers of persons, some of honorable rank, turned from their idols to worship the living God and he soon gathered about him an enthusiastic people. During his stay at Thessalonica he pretty nearly wore himself out—for he had determined that he would accept no help from the people who appeared to have been in great straits at that time. He toiled night and day at his trade of tent-making but even then could not earn sufficient income to survive. He might have failed to maintain his existence had not the believers at Philippi sent once, and again, to assist him. Thus, being affectionately desirous of winning them to Jesus, the apostle was willing to have given to them not the gospel of God, only, but even his own life. The Lord accepted the cheerful sacrifice and gave the apostle the reward he sought. The Thessalonians not only received the word with joy of the Holy Spirit but became zealous in making it known. Their intensity of faith helped to spread the gospel, for their lives were notably affected by it. And for their earnestness and godliness they were everywhere talked of. Living in a trading town, to which many went and from which many came, their singular devotion to the faith of the Lord Jesus became the theme of conversation all over Greece. And thus inquiry was promoted and the gospel was sounded out far and wide. In their case, learners speedily became teachers. The Lord Jesus had thus not only given them drink but He had made them into a well overflowing, to refresh the thirst of thousands. They had heard the gospel trumpet and now they had become trumpeters themselves! In their lives the echoes of Paul's preaching were preserved. This was a very happy circumstance for the tried apostle and greatly cheered his spirit.

These Thessalonians must have been especially gracious people for Paul to praise them so heartily. “As the fining-pot for silver and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.” Many can bear slander better than they could endure praise. Many, when commended, become puffed up. But the Thessalonians were in such a happy spiritual condition that Paul could safely speak of them as, “examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.” That praise was all the more precious because it was not indiscriminate—“not laid on with a trowel,” as the proverb puts it. The Thessalonians had faulty ones among them. The best church that ever existed has had in it imperfect members. And the very virtues of the Thessalonians carried them into certain faults. They were notable for their expectation of the coming of the Lord and certain of them became fanatical and ceased from work because of the speedy approach of the last day. The apostle was obliged to talk to them about this in his two epistles, and even to lay down the rule very strongly—“If any man will not work, neither let him eat.” Under whatever pretense men might cease from their daily callings they were not to be maintained by their brethren. These good people were too ready to be deceived by idle rumors of coming wonders. Even the Thessalonian church had its spots. But, then, there are spots on the sun and yet we do not speak of it as a dark body since its light so much preponderates. Grave faults in the Thessalonian church did not prevent our honest apostle from awarding praise where praise was due. When a man is sound at heart, praise does not become an intoxi-

cating wine, but an invigorating tonic. Feeling a modest fear that he does not deserve the warm commendation, the good man is anxious to live up to the character imputed to him. This will be the case, however, only with those whose spiritual life is vigorous.

I entreat you, dear friends, to learn practically from these Thessalonians by being led to imitate them. May it be truly said of us also, “From you sounded out the word of the Lord”! It is true even now in a measure—may it be far more so! The expression to which I would call your attention is this—“From you sounded out the word of the Lord.” It reminds us of a trumpet and its far-sounding notes. Having heard the gospel sounding within, they in return sounded it out.

First, let us carefully look at the trumpeters. What sort of men are these who make God’s word to sound out? When we have talked about the men we will look at their trumpets and see how it is that they give forth so telling a sound. Next, we will speak of the need of such a trumpet blast just now. And close by inquiring whether we are not called to give forth that trumpet sound.

I. We begin by looking at THE TRUMPETERS. Who are these by whom the word of the Lord is sounded out? I shall hastily give you a picture of these Thessalonians drawn from Paul’s letters to them.

Observe at the outset that they were a people whom the three cardinal graces were conspicuous. Kindly look at the third verse: “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope.” The three divine sisters—Faith, Hope, Love—linked hands in their lives. These were with them in their best condition—faith working, love laboring, hope enduring. Faith without works is dead. Faith performing her work with energy is healthy and alive. Paul saw the Thessalonian believers to be fulfilling the lifework of a true faith. Nor was faith left to work alone—at her right hand was love, sweetening and brightening all. Their love did not consist in words or in mere amiability of temper. But it worked with a *will*. They threw their whole hearts into the cause of God—they loved Jesus and rapturously waited for His appearing. They loved one another and shared the sufferings of their leaders in the time of persecution. They exhibited a labor of love—it was not work, only, but in intensity it deserved to be called “labor.” As for hope—that bright-eyed grace which looks within the veil and realizes things not seen as yet—it was peculiarly their endowment. This enabled them to bear with patience their suffering for Christ—whether it lay in false accusation, or in the spoiling of their goods. Of them it could be said, “Now abides faith, hope, charity, these three.” Brethren, it is of no use for us to attempt to sound out the word of the Lord if we have not the spiritual power which lies in those three divine graces. These are of first importance. Those precious truths of God which faith believes, which love delights in, which hope relies upon—these are the truths of God we shall diligently make known. We believe, and therefore speak. We love, and therefore testify. We hope, and therefore make known.

Next I note these Thessalonian believers were a people whose election was clear. Read the fourth verse—“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.” Paul said the same of them in the second epistle (2:13)—“We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” They were not ashamed to believe the doctrine of election as some professors are. They rejoiced in having been chosen of God from the beginning. They saw the practical nature of election for they perceived that they were chosen unto *sanctification*. Their lives were such as to prove that they were the Lord’s chosen people for they became choice brethren. They gave evidence of the secret choice of God by their holy lives. I hope this is true of us as a people—we are old-fashioned enough to rejoice in the electing love of God and free grace has a sweet sound to our ears. If it is so, we ought to bring forth fruits worthy of it. Gratitude for sovereign grace and eternal love should operate upon us mightily. Let the slaves of law go to their tasks with a lash at their backs—the chosen of God will serve Him with delight and do ten times more from love than others from hope of wages. None can show forth the praises of God like those who taste His especial love and know the unutterable sweetness of it.

These trumpeters had received the word of God themselves in much assurance and with much power. Note the fifth verse—“For our gospel came not unto you in word, only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.” The apostle also says, in the thirteenth verse of the second chapter, “For this cause, also, we thank God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God

which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe.” Beloved, it is a poor thing to receive the gospel in word only. You then say, “Yes, it is true, I believe it.” And there the matter ends. It is a far different matter to *feel* the power of the word as it comes from the omnipotent Lord so as to have your heart broken by it and then healed by it. To receive the gospel as indisputable, infallible and divine is to receive it, indeed. To receive it not because you think a certain way but because it carries conviction with it and bears you away by its irresistible force—that is to receive it in its *power*. Beloved, I do not believe a man will spend his life in spreading a doctrine which has never mastered his spirit. But when the truth of God takes possession of a man and holds him by force as a strong man armed keeps his own house, then will he run up his flag and openly acknowledge the Mighty One who reigns within. He who believes, and is sure, is the man who will propagate the faith and desire that others should accept it. What a difference there is between the man who has felt the omnipotence of truth and another who merely professes to entertain sound opinions! If the almighty word has carried you captive you will hold it fast and nothing will persuade you either to surrender it or to stifle it.

The Thessalonians were a people whose constancy was proven. They received the word “with much affliction.” The apostle says, “For you, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for you also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews.” The assault by the mob, recorded in Acts 17, was, doubtless, only one of their many trials. They remained steadfast and enthusiastic under all their tribulations. And therefore the gospel was sounded out by them. Cowards hold their tongues—but brave men are not to be put down. Having already borne slander, reproach and misrepresentation of every kind, we are not abashed but rather are hardened to endurance and publish our belief more unreservedly than ever. We have nothing to conceal, nothing to fear. Slander can say no more. Therefore we, the more boldly sound forth the word of God. Brethren, unless you can hold on in rough weather and bear up under opposition you will do little in sounding out the word of God. Trumpets must be made of hard metal and trumpeters must have something of the soldier about them, or little will come of it.

Therefore these people really and lovingly served God. Look at the ninth verse—“For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” I have no doubt many of these folks had been great devotees of their idols for it is amazing what idolaters will do for their deities! At this day the gifts of Hindus to idol shrines put to shame the offerings given by Christians to their Lord. Have you not heard how they were likely to throw their very lives away beneath the wheels of the chariot of their demon god? Shall hideous deities of wood and stone command a zeal which is not shown in the service of the living God? I doubt not that these Thessalonians became as earnest worshippers of the living Jehovah as they had once been earnest votaries of their idols. They turned from idols but they turned to serve God. They were not turned in opinion, only, but in a practical manner. What a pity it is that to many Christian professors, religion is opinion, and conversion a feeling! Do not many live as if God were a myth and the service of God a sham? If God is God, serve Him—service is the right of Godhead. Does not the Lord Himself say, “If then I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear?” Oh, that to us the service of the Lord may be a delight—and then it will be as natural to us to sound out the word of the Lord as it is for birds to sing!

For one thing the Thessalonians were peculiarly notable—they were enthusiastic expectants of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says of them in the tenth verse that they waited for the Son of God from heaven. They really expected Christ to come and to come speedily. They even carried this expectation beyond its proper bounds—they grew impatient of the Lord’s apparent delay. Some of their number died and they laid it to heart as though in their case their hope had failed. Paul wrote to them concerning this—“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” They were not losers by their death. Those who remained alive till the advent would have no preference over those who slept. In their case there was no need to write “of the times and the seasons,” for they well knew that the Lord would come as a

thief in the night. They came to expect the immediate coming of the Lord as to fall into unhealthy excitement about it. And it was needful for Paul, to prevent their becoming fanatical, to say, “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.” Paul delighted to see them waiting for the coming of Christ. But he also prayed, “The Lord direct your hearts into the patient waiting for Christ.” He wishes rest to the troubled—but this unrest was a virtue carried to excess. We are not, many of us, in danger of exaggeration in that direction. I fear that we are more likely to forget the Lord’s coming, or to treat it as an unpractical speculation.

If any truth of God should arouse us this should do it—yet even the wise virgins, as well as the foolish, are all too apt to slumber and sleep because the Bridegroom delays His coming. Hear you not the midnight cry? Does not this startle you? “Behold, the Bridegroom comes; go out to meet Him.” If you hearken to that call you will be the men to sound out the word of the Lord in every place. If we, as a church and people are more and more influenced by the expectation of our Lord’s appearing, we shall be more eager to spread His gospel! Remember that He may come at once. Those things of which Paul spoke as hindering His coming have now come and gone; eighteen centuries and more have passed away since Paul wrote that the Lord comes quickly. Stir up yourselves then, to use all diligence. Proclaim His word, and according to your ability go forth into the entire world and preach the gospel to every creature. You that look for your Lord—you are the men who should herald His coming by a clear testimony to His name in every place.

Thus I have given you hints as to what kinds of men are likely to sound forth the word of God. Judge my brethren, whether you have these qualifications. It is my sincere impression that they are to be found in many of you.

II. Secondly, let us notice THEIR TRUMPETS. “From you sounded out the word of the Lord.” Their testimony was distinct, clear, resonant and far-sounding. We may find an illustration in the silver trumpets of the sanctuary which were sounded to gather the people together. Let your trumpets ring out the call to assemble to our Lord Jesus, the true Shiloh—unto who shall the gathering of the people be. We may further think of the Jubilee trumpet which early in the morning proclaimed clearance of debts, release from bondage and restoration to lost heritages. Such are the glad announcements of the gospel. Let us hasten to make them. Trumpets are also blown in time of war—many are the allusions to this in Scripture. Oh, that the church of God may boldly sound the war trumpet, at this time, against impurity, intemperance, false doctrine, and loose living! Our Lord has come to send a sword upon earth in these matters. Oh that from each one of us the war blast may be sounded without fear or hesitation! Gladly would we also earn the name given to the apostles, “They that turn the world upside down”; for at present it is wrong side up! A trumpet is also used simply for musical purposes and the testimony of the church to her Lord Jesus should be the most melodious sound the ears of man have ever heard—

“How sweet the name of Jesus sounds!”

Oh, to sound forth the glorious name “with trumpet and sound of cornet,” that multitudes might be compelled to hear it! Oh, to make all earth and heaven ring with that dear name! Somebody writing upon this verse compares the sounding forth to the voices of church bells. I will suppose that you are sojourning among the hills and have almost lost reckoning of the days. How clearly are you told that it is the Sabbath morning when you hear the sweet voices of the bells from yonder tower far away! The call comes through the wood and over the moor and it seems to say, “Come here and worship, for the day of rest has come.”

Each church should find in its living members its best peal of bells. Every individual, great and little, should give forth his sound—no one should be dumb, Oh that it were always so—that everyone would constantly show forth the praises of the Lord! The Lord of hosts is with us. Let us lift up the shout of a King. He is all in all to us. Let us make Him known. God grant us to realize that we may give a loud fanfare upon the silver trumpets to our coming Prince!

What was the means by which these excellent people made the gospel to sound out? It was made known by the remarkable conversions which happened among them. These men had been idolaters and had fallen into many lusts common in those times. Paul's preaching had made a change which none could have looked for. They had been brought to worship the true God and to look for His Son from heaven and to walk worthy of their high calling. Everybody asked, "Why, what has happened to these Thessalonians? These people have broken their idols—they worship the one God. They trust in Jesus. They are no longer drunken, dishonest, impure, and contentious." Everybody talked of what had taken place among these converted people. Oh, for conversions plentiful, clear, singular and manifest—so the word of God may sound out! Our converts are our best advertisements and arguments. Have you not known a whole town startled by the conversion of one great sinner? A distinct, clear-cut conversion will often astound an entire parish and compel the crowd to say, "What is this word of the Lord?" Brothers and sisters may your own conversions and those of many around you proclaim aloud the power of the word of God and the efficacy of faith in the precious blood of Jesus!

The attention commanded by their conversion was further secured by their unmistakable, unquestionable character. They became such godly, honest, upright, sober, saintly people that all who observed them took note of their excellence. They were Christians, indeed, for they were Christians in their deeds. Their whole lives were affected by their faith—both at home and abroad. They were so admirable in character that they had become examples to those who were already saved. Notice in the seventh verse the remarkable expression, "You were examples to all that believe." It is not so difficult to become an example to the ungodly, for their level is a low one. But it is a high attainment to become an example to those who fear God. This requires divine grace. If even saints may copy from you, you had need write a good hand. The Thessalonians had attained to this, and it was by this that they were able to give such voice to the gospel. Holy living is a grand pulpit. A godly character has a louder voice in it than the most eloquent tongue. Character is our Chrysostom—holiness has a golden mouth. The apostle says that their lives were so complete a publication of the gospel that he did not need to call attention thereto. He writes, "We need not to speak anything"—as much as to say, "We have only to point to you." Shall I ever feel that I have little need to preach in words since my people preach far better by their lives? Yes, there are many cases among you concerning which I might say—"There, watch that friend's life and see what the gospel is—there is no need for me to tell you." Nobody stands on a summer day and points upward, saying, "There is the sun." No, the great light sheds its radiance everywhere and nobody mistakes him for the moon or a star. Oh, that all of us were of such a character that none should mistake us! Till we have more grace in our hearts and more holiness in our lives, we shall lack the greatest means of making the gospel known. We must shine by our works if men are to see our light. Oh, what a sounding forth of the word will your holy lives be! Without these, all is vain. If the life contradicts the voice, it will be as when a trumpet is stopped up and blow as you may, no sound is heard.

I have no doubt that the Thessalonians added to their character many earnest efforts for the spread of the truth of God. They went about telling what they had heard, believed and enjoyed. Some of them became preachers of the word at home and others went abroad to publish the glad tidings. Jesus would be made known to the poor in the back slums of Thessalonica and talked of to the sailors on board the vessels and to the merchants on the wharfs. Are you, beloved, all of you, making Jesus known? Are there any of you silent? Have we not among us some who should now be working in foreign lands? Have we not in these pews many whose voices should be heard in our streets? We shall never be as we ought to be till every talent is utilized. We must be all at it, always at it, and at it with all our might. We have not come to this yet. May the love of Christ compel us thereto!

Meanwhile, it was by their faith that their teaching was made so clear and forcible. They were intense believers, so that Paul says, "Your faith to God-ward is spread abroad." They did not half-heartedly teach what they half-heartedly believed. They accepted the teaching of the apostle as being not the word of man but the word of God. And so they spoke with the accent of conviction. Those who heard them felt that they were enfeebled by no doubts but were filled with full assurance of the eternal verities. Their goods were spoiled—they were themselves brought before magistrates and yet they stood

fast in the faith and had no secret mistrust. There was no moving them, although the philosophers sneered at them and the superstitious persecuted them. They stood like rocks amid raging seas. This was a trumpet for the gospel blasting loudly. When holy constancy is to the front under reproach and ridicule, the gospel is sounded as with a bugle note and men are compelled to hear it. Brothers and sisters, you possess this confidence. Have it more and more!

May we have among us remarkable conversions, unquestionable character, earnest effort and intense faith, and these will be to us all the trumpet that we need. We need not blow our own trumpets nor borrow the whistles of politics or amusement. But the word of the Lord will by these sound forth all around us. I cannot keep you long upon these points—my aim is not to fill up the time but to fill you with an eager desire to sound out the truth of God.

III. Oh that the Holy Spirit would put fire into my sermon—that its live coals may touch your hearts while I say that THERE IS NEED, AT THE PRESENT TIME, FOR A TRUMPET BLAST OF THIS KIND.

Brethren, the word of the Lord ought to be sounded out because it is the word of God. If it is the word of man let *him* spread it as he can. We are not concerned to help him. The word of man comes from a dying source and it will return to it. But the word of the Lord endures forever—

*“Float, float, you winds, His story!
And you, you waters, roll,
Till, like a sea of glory,
It spreads from pole to pole.”*

The word of the Lord is so all-important that it should have a free course, run and be glorified. When He gives the word, great should be the company of them that publish it. If you believe the gospel to be the divine word you dare not withhold it. The stones would cry out if you were silent.

With many of us this is a matter of solemn obligation. The word of God has been to us life from the dead, deliverance out of bondage, and food for our hunger, strength for our weakness, comfort for our sorrow and satisfaction for our hearts. Spread it then—

*“Can you, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Can you, to men unenlightened,
The lamp of life deny?”*

Seeing that God’s word has come to you with power and has saved you from all evil, you *must* sound it abroad.

Remember too, that this is salvation to the perishing. Did not one dear brother and deacon on Monday night pray to the Lord with great fervor, reiterating these words, “They are perishing; they are perishing; they are perishing, Lord, save them!”? You believe that men are diseased with sin and that Christ is the only remedy—will you not tell them the remedy? You see men dying without hope—will you not tell them where there is hope as to the hereafter? You tremblingly feel that for souls to die without accepting the Savior is eternal woe—will you not pray for them, in Christ’s place, to be reconciled to God? O sirs, by everything that is terrible in the doom of those who die in unbelief, I charge you, sound out the word of the Lord! As you will shortly appear before the judgment seat of Christ, be clear of the blood of all men. The gospel has power to save today and to save forever—sound it out!

This is a time in which the word of the Lord is much abused. Many venture to say that it has lost its power and has proved unsuitable to the age. They tell us that we need something more advanced than it. O you that love it, avenge this insult by manifesting its power in your lives and by sounding out the old gospel with new vigor! By your holy characters, and by your incessant labors, force men to see the power of the divine word! Let its secret power be embodied in your practical consecration and proclaimed in your incessant witness-bearing. When I wish to speak best, my tongue fails me. I am a poor advocate, but oh, I pray you, by the glory of the Ever Blessed—which is tarnished by the foul mouths of ungodly men—seek with sevenfold energy to make known Christ crucified, and the way of salvation by faith in Him! If you have slept until now; “Awake, awake! Put on strength!” for the enemy is at the gate. I be-

seech you, now that Christ's crown and throne are assailed by His adversaries, put on your armor, grasp the sword, and stand up for the sacred cause.

At this time many other voices are clamoring to be heard. The air is full of din. Men have devised new methods by which to elevate the race and loud are the voices that proclaim the man-invented nostrums. "Shall we be heard?" cries one, "if we lift up our voices?" Yes, if you take the gospel trumpet you will enforce a hearing. It chanced one evening, when there was a large gathering of friends at the Orphanage that our boys were sweetly singing a hymn tune upon their bells. An American organ was being played as an accompaniment, and all the gathered company were singing at their best, making a rushing flood of music. Just then I quietly hinted to our friend, Mr. Manton Smith, to put in a few notes from his silver cornet. And when he placed it to his lips and threw his soul into it, the lone man was heard above us all! Bells, organ, voices—everything seemed to yield before that one clear blast of trumpet music! So will it be with the gospel. Only sound it out as God's own word, and let the power of the Holy Spirit go with it, and it will drown all music but its own. At any rate, you will have done your part and will be no longer responsible, even if men do not hear it, if from your very soul you sound out the word of the Lord.

Need I say more to show you how *necessary* it is that we now should put a tongue into the heavenly doctrine and let it proclaim salvation to all lands?

V. I want, during my last few minutes, to hint to the members of this church and to those many friends far and near who have so generously associated with me in holy enterprises that **WE ARE THE PEOPLE TO GIVE FORTH THIS SOUND.**

It is our duty, first of all, because of our position. Thessalonica was a well-chosen center because it was a place of great resort. Ships were always coming into that port and going out again. Whatever was done at Thessalonica would soon be known in all quarters. We are placed in a central position in London. Who does not know the Tabernacle? Here the tribes come up and here the multitudes continually assemble. Friends from the country flock to this spot. And on any summer Sabbath, persons from all countries are in these pews and aisles. I state the simple truth when I speak of this house as known to some of all nations, and therefore what is done here, is done in the heart of England and in the center of the world. If you, as a church, can sound forth by your character and exertions the word of God, you are in the fit place for it. The position demands it of you—act not unworthily!

Providence has forced us into prominence. We have not desired it, but we are known and observed by multitudes. If, beloved, we keep the fire burning here it will be a beacon seen afar. If we are consecrated men and women we have a great opportunity. If my helpers will see to it that nothing fails in this place, we shall encourage many. But we shall dispirit thousands unless we carry on the work here with great vigor, the Lord being our helper.

Nor can I forget our numbers. There may have been churches of larger numbers than ours but I have never heard of them. In this I do not glory but I dare not conceal from you the anxiety which it causes me. If little is done by such an assembly it will be a great disgrace to us all. I am overwhelmed with the thought of more than five thousand souls united here in church fellowship. Large numbers may be our weakness. We may become a mere horde of men without discipline, without unity, without power. But I trust in the great Lord that it shall not be so. If God has caused us to be as large as almost any other ten churches put together, does He not call upon us to exert ourselves ten times more than others to spread abroad the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? I am sorely burdened with this great host—will you allow it to be a burden? Will you not make it a joy? Will all these professed believers make up a crowded hospital? Shall not this house rather be a barrack of soldiers? Shall not our voice be louder for our Lord than if we were but five hundred instead of five thousand? How would I plead with you if I knew how! Do not make this community a gigantic failure. God grant that, remembering our numbers, we may not be satisfied with a thin and feeble voice for Jesus. Our voice should be as the noise of many waters. Is it so? Is it as much so as it ought to be? Oh, for the Spirit of God among us as a rushing mighty wind!

Through our agencies we ought to sound out the word of the Lord very loudly. At this moment you have, by the College, sent out more than seven hundred preachers of the word into all countries. Oh, that

they were all as faithful as some are! Many are the churches presided over by those trained in your school of the prophets—pray that the Lord may be with them. Your orphan children are growing up—oh, that they may be a seed to serve the Lord! Your peddlers are going from door to door with holy literature. Oh for the power of God with their laborious efforts! Your evangelists are heard by tens of thousands—implore the unction from on high for them. The sermons preached in this place are not only printed in our own tongue but many of them are translated into other languages and are widely read. This is no mean agency for good. All this, and much more which I will not speak upon, I mention not to boast, but that we may be humbled under our responsibilities and may cry to God for His power. All this, if the Holy Spirit is with us, must accomplish great results. But without Him—and we shall be without Him unless we are a holy, godly, earnest, Christ-loving people—nothing will be accomplished. Our agencies will become burdens to us until that which should be the armor of our warfare will become the sepulcher of our life. I feel this more than anyone else since the very finding and using of funds for so great a work would crush me if the Lord were not my helper.

Beloved, I press home upon you the duty of sounding out the word of God because of your prayers. If there is a people under heaven that constantly meets in large numbers to pray, we are that people. However some of you are lax on this point, but I am bound to say that I rejoice in your gatherings for prayer. In this you are my joy and crown. God be praised for it! But if any cry to God and then do not work for Him, what hypocrisy it is! What if we ask Him to save souls and never lift a finger to spread the gospel? Is this truthful? Dare we hang the trumpet on the wall and then pray, “Lord, let it be blown”? No. By the honesty of your hearts set that trumpet to your lips if you desire its sound to go forth. Give it your very life’s breath. Lift up your voice with strength—lift it up! Be not afraid.

Once more—you have stood with me in solemn protest against the declensions of the age. He who knows all things knows what this has cost me. But your love has been a great relief to me in the bitter sorrow. We will have no complicity with error—we will not aid the Philistines in shearing away the locks of the gospel’s strength. Having protested, we must justify our position by our lives. We shall be dishonored unless we have the power of God especially resting upon us—that may be a small thing—but the truth of God itself will be dishonored. And this we cannot bear. If the gospel is indeed true—and we have no doubt about it—we beseech the God of truth to grant us the sign and seal from heaven by baring His holy arm in our midst. Today, again, I lay the sacrifice upon the altar by reasserting the old gospel against the down-grade of the times. The God that answers by fire let Him be God! May the tongues of fire descend and rest on you. May you who are with me, whether in London or in the utmost parts of the earth, be inflamed with zeal and fired with love. May the water in the trenches be licked up by the flame and the whole sacrifice consumed with heaven’s own fire till the people, once deluded by Baal, shall be forced to cry, “Jehovah, He is the God! Jehovah, He is the God!” May the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ triumph in the midst of the earth and become, as it always has been, the truth by which the glory of the Lord shall be revealed! The Lord grant it; labor, all of you to secure it.

I have not preached to sinners. I leave that, for once, to you. I lay on you this burden—that you each one make the word of the Lord to sound out “so that we need not to speak anything.” God grant it may be so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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